

# UNITY CLUBS

STAR 14 AUG 2002

## Promote racial understanding among students, PM urges varsities

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Set up inter-racial clubs to promote racial understanding, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told universities yesterday.

The Prime Minister said that through such clubs, courses on the customs, taboos and sensitivities of the various races could be organised to help students work consciously towards avoiding disputes and quarrels over racial differences.

“The Government is willing to offer prizes to clubs which are successful in attracting the highest number of members and also in coming out with ways to further foster ties among them,” he said in his inaugural lecture at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Utar) here after officiating at its opening.

Later, at a press conference, he blamed some university authorities and staff for the decline in inter-racial relations among their students.

In some universities, the people in authority and staff were the ones who promoted activities which were designed to stop students of different races from mixing freely on campus, he said. “We want students to stay together in dormitories, play together and be involved in sporting activities together, but there is no positive step (among some university authorities) towards making this a reality.”

“Worse still, there are people in the universities who go against the National Education Policy by implementing programmes that are meant to keep students of different races apart,” he said.

Most of the time, said Dr Mahathir, the issue of religion would be used as an excuse to segregate students and to prevent them from mixing freely.

“For example, they will say that Muslim students need to learn about the religion and perform special prayers as an excuse to keep them apart from others.

“Some even went to the extent of using a different way of dressing to segregate students besides prohibiting them from being involved in certain kinds of sporting and recreational activities.

“When that happens, others will respond by going to the other extreme,” he said.

In his lecture, Dr Mahathir said the Government was concerned over the development in local universities where students were keeping to their own race, did not live in the same dormitory, sat apart in lecture theatres and did not mix around during extra-curricular activities.

This, he said, was an unhealthy situation which could be dangerous to the country’s future.

He said the Government could not allow this trend to continue, adding that it would take steps to ensure that students in universities were made up of all races.

“I am well aware of the saying that ‘you can take a horse to water, but you cannot make it

drink.’ But take it to the water you must. We will find a way to make it drink,” he added.

He also urged local universities to concentrate on original academic research based on the needs of the country without aping foreign universities.

Dr Mahathir said he viewed the issue of research by local universities as very impor-

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**Don't become  
certificate  
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tant because he did not want Malaysian universities to become “certificate mills” which served only as the conduit for education and knowledge from outside.

“The time has come for us to think for ourselves about the administration of the country and the ideology that is most suitable for us.

“We are equally capable of thinking up ways to administer and develop a country that is not just applicable to us, but also to others,” he said, adding that universities should contribute towards reducing the supremacy of western thinkers in various fields.

He said universities should also carry out academic research on the history and cultures of the country, focusing on its multi-racial facet.